The Reasons

Humbly offered to Consideration,

Why the Incorporating the whole Trade of the WOOLLEN *Manufactures of this Kingdom to the Company called* The Merchant-Adventurers of ENGLAND, *is and will prove more and more detrimental as to the Country in general, so especially to the County of* Devon, *and City of* Exon. *And also how a Frank and Free Trade to all* ENGLISH *Merchants, will be far more advantagious to the whole Land.*

I. BEcause a Company of men Incorporated, may combine at pleasure to make the Clothier take what Prices they please: For though they may be many Members, yet evident it is to reason, that many Incorporated become as one man, and may by their joint Orders amongst themselves (in which by their Oath they are bound to keep secrecie) become as one Buyer.

II. Because, as very many Manufactures are made at a very great distance from *London*, the Residence of this Company, (who ship most of the Woollen Commodities made on this side *Trent*, from that Port;) So it is most convenient to the Clothier to sell his goods as near home as he can, and most advantagious to the Merchant to export them from the neerest Port. For it is evident to reason, That those that ship the *Devonshire*-Drapery from *Exon* or any other Port thereabout, may afford the Commodity considerably cheaper than he that ships the same from *London*; moreover it affords some Trade to our City of *Exon*, to the relief of our Poor, and encouragement of our Navigation.

III. It is repugnant to the very Law of Nature, to give the chief and general Commodity of a Country to a few; in which every free-born Inhabitant may claim a natural interest.

IV. It is contrary to the custom of all Nations; for there is no Kingdom or Commonwealth hath the like example of managing a Trade so near home, by a Company.

V. We are informed by Learned Council, That it is repugnant to *Magna Charta*, Petition of Right; and it is point-blank against an express Statute of *Hen.7. an.12. cap.6.* made against the Company of Merchant-Adventurers, and is yet in force.

VI. The same, if not higher Reasons may be alleadged against this Company, that were produced against the *Spanish* and *French* Companies, 3. *Jacobi*, which were put down as *Monopolizers*, a word odious all the world over.

VII. Because it hath been the practice of this Company, and is naturally incident to a Company of men united; Not to endevour to put off Quantities of Commodities, but to get much by a little. And therefore *Anno* 1606. *Octob.* 11. at their Court they made an Order to stint the general Number of Clothes to be exported, and what proportion each Brother should have; And thereby keeping the Market bare, did give an advantage, yea put a necessity upon the *Dutch* to increase their Making: whereas if they would have carried plenty, and afforded at a reasonable gain, so that the *Dutch* could not have made so cheap; they would never so monstrously have increased the number of Clothes made. This we find to be the practice of the *East-India* Company of *Holland*, who having the sole Trade of many *East-India* Commodities, do not bring the half of what they could procure, as of Spices &c. that they may by scarcity advance the prices of them, as they have done: Which though it be a benefit to that Company, yet must needs, especially in Manufactures, be a great prejudice to the Natives of *East-India*. And the like practice, much more a detriment to this Kingdom; it being a stinting of a Commodity, by which so many thousand families have their subsistence.

VIII. Because the County of *Devon* and City of *Exon* do find, that the Merchant-Adventurers do trade very little in that Country's Commodities; as by an Accompt taken at the Custom-house Books of *Exon*, does demonstrate, That from 24 *June* 1661. to

29 *September*

29 *September* next following, the ſaid Company entred out but 225. pieces of Woollen Manufactures, which paid Cuſtom to His Majeſty, 8 *l.*--3 *s.*--10½. But in that ſpace of time, the Free Merchants entred 9254. pieces, and paid Cuſtom, 325 *l.*--3 *s.*--5 *d.* Hereby may be ſeen what prejudice would ariſe to His Majeſty by loſs of Cuſtom, (which even the Officers of the Port of *London* do experience, and can teſtifie to be very great, ſince this Company's Patent,) ſhould the Free Traders be wholly debarred from that liberty they have uſed.

IX. It is an undeniable truth, That nothing conduceth more to the improvement of Trade, than plenty of Merchandiſe, and multitude of Merchants; whereof there hath been of late years moſt clear and actual experience. For (as Mr. *Skinner* declared) 22 *Jacobi*, Certificate was given of 25000. Clothes *per annum* made in *Holland:* And it was made apparent to the Parliament, that the cauſe hereof was the Reſtraints which were uſed to be made by the aforeſaid Company. Whereupon theſe two Votes paſſed in full Parliament.

Die Veneris 30 Aprilis, 22 Jacobi.

VPon Report made this day to the Commons Houſe of Parliament, from the Grand Committee for Trade, concerning the Impreſt money ſet by the Company of Merchant-Adventurers of London *upon Cloth, And after long Debate thereof in the Houſe, It is reſolved and declared by the ſaid Houſe of Commons, That the Opinion of the Houſe is, That ſuch ſetting of the Impreſt money upon Cloth, is unlawful, unjuſt, and a grievance to the People, and is to be taken off and no longer to be continued by them. And upon further Report by the ſaid Committee, and like Debate in the ſaid Houſe, It is further declared, that the Houſe thinks fit, That as well the Merchant-Adventurers, as all other Merchants promiſcuouſly, may tranſport to all places all Northern and Weſtern Dozens and Kerſies, and New Manufactures.*

H. Elſynge, Cler. Dom. Com.

And

And as if this had not been full enough, this following Order was made the Moneth following, to ſtrengthen it.

Die Lunæ 10 Maii, 22 Jacobi.

VPon the Report made this day to the Houſe of Commons from the Grand Committee for Trade, concerning the freedom of Exportation of Dyed and Dreſſed and all Coloured Clothes into the Parts of Germany *and the* Low-Countries, *by other Merchants beſides the Merchant-Adventurers; And after a long Debate thereof in the Houſe of Commons, It is reſolved and declared by the ſaid Houſe of Commons, That the Opinion thereof is, That other Merchants beſides the Merchant-Adventurers, may freely Trade with Dyed and Dreſſed, and all ſorts of Coloured Cloth, into* Germany *and the* Low-Countries.

H. Elſynge, Cler. Dom. Com.

Now very remarkable it is, That by that conceſſion of Liberty, not only the *Engliſh* Traders increaſed to about Six hundred, but the *Dutch* fell off from making of Cloth; ſo that *Anno* 1632. they did not make 4000. Clothes *per an.* But afterwards a Proclamation came out about *Anno* 1634. reſtraining Trade onely to the ſaid Company; by which means, in 1639. & 1640 the 600 Traders fell to 180. and the *Dutch* increaſed to make 20000 Clothes *per annum*, greatly to the damage of this Kingdom: All which can be clearly proved. And therefore,

X. It may be urged as a Reaſon, That if this Company had been good for the Kingdom in general, it is almoſt impoſſible but this Company would have been eſtabliſhed by Law; the Conveniences and Inconveniences thereof having been ſo oft debated in Parliament: But in ſtead thereof, a Law was made againſt them, above 160. years paſt.

XI. It is humbly offered, That the limiting ſo great a Commodity to ſo few Men, is a mighty diſcouragement to the Invention and framing of New Manufactures. For, what Merchant will buſie his

his brain to invent new, except he may have the liberty to transport to what Port or place he ſhall think fitting.

XII. The Courſe and Cuſtom of this Company, which they blanch with the ſpecious name of Regulation, is deſtructive to the Trade of this Kingdom, and a diſcouragement to any Merchant to enter into their Society.

Firſt, In regard of ſome extravagant Oaths which binds the Members to an implicite Obedience; (as may be ſeen in their Oath:) though never ſo prejudicial to the general good of the Kingdom; then they have a purging Oath, which they at pleaſure adminiſter, whereby the party ſworn, is to accuſe himſelf; which is repugnant to all Lawes, and abhorring to Nature; for, *Nemo tenetur accuſare ſeipſum.*

Secondly, Another Inconveniency is, their ſeldom Shipping; ſometimes but twice, and at moſt, but thrice in a year, as bewitcht to an old Cuſtom; whereas the ground and reaſon of the ancient practice is ceaſed: For of old it was ſo, becauſe the Manufactures were then carried to Fairs, which were called Marts, as *Briſtow* Fair is twice a year; when the Fair was done, there was no more to do till next Fair; againſt which time, the Merchants provided Goods to ſend or carry to that Mart: But it is otherwiſe now, for Cuſtomers are weekly coming to them, and therefore this Order now is prejudicial to the Merchant, who by ſuch tedious Shippings, is forced to pay double the Frait other Merchants pay; and young men are fain to venture all their Stocks at once, and many times their Credit alſo. But to the Clothier it's moſt hurtful; for he cannot ſell, but when the Merchant pleaſeth to buy; and moſt Merchants cannot buy, but when they may Ship; except upon time, which endeareth the Commodity; or elſe the neceſſitous Clothier is fain to ſell, for want of monies, to the great monied Merchant, though to his great loſs. Moreover, we have found by experience, that ſome ſorts of Goods have been preſently ſold, and more have been deſired; but cannot be obtained by this manner of Exportation, and therefore the *Dutch* are neceſſitated to fall to make it themſelvs, which by daily Exportation would be prevented.

Thirdly, The Impoſitions and Fines which they lay upon the Manufactures, are very great, being near as much as the Kings Cuſtoms; inſomuch, that from *Anno* 1616. to 1641. they received

ceived in Impoſitions, as it hath been extracted out of their own Leger-Books, 182295. *l.* odd monies, which hinders the cheapneſs of our Commodities; and cheapneſs is the only way to cauſe the *Dutch* deſiſt making of Cloth; for the *Dutch-man* goes alwayes to the cheapeſt, though from a Chriſtian to a Jew.

Fourthly, The Company ſtrictly ties their Members to two Towns; *Hamburgh* and *Dort*: The firſt, but the entrance into *Germany*, and the confining the Trade to that place, and neceſſitating people to travel two or three hundred miles, to fetch what they needed, is, doubtleſs, a great cauſe why they alſo have been put upon making of Cloth. The laſt, *viz. Dort*, is the moſt inconſiderableſt and inconvenient place imaginable for that Trade. 1. Becauſe it is but the entrance into the Countrey, and Goods may be carried much further for the ſame Frait. 2. It is diſcomodious for all people to come unto; and for the Companies Trade the moſt inconvenient place, as they confeſs, of all the Countrey. 3. They want there the greateſt accommodations of a Merchant; *viz.* Commodities for Returns, and Bills for Exchange; they are forced to uſe Correſpondents at *Rotterdam* and *Amſterdam* to do both; which muſt coſt monies, and puts them to greater hazards than they need run. —— The confining to either of theſe places, is greatly prejudicial to the diſperſing of our Commodities; firſt, becauſe if the Chapmen can have of their own, or any others nearer hand, they will never travel ſo far, and leave their Families and Callings, to obtain Goods. Secondly, becauſe thoſe that come to *Dort*, moſt are Groſſiers, who alſo make much Cloth, and will endeavour to make uſe of our Manufactures to put off their own: All theſe Inconveniences attend them for a few imaginary Priviledges to ſave a little Exciſe to their Factors, with ſome other ſo inconſiderable advantages, that they are not worthy to be put into the Balance, with the advantage of convenient places for vending their Merchandize. Thirdly, By their being at ſuch a diſtance from the heart of the Countrey, they can never pry into, and diſcover what the Countrey moſt wants, that they may give advice for a ſutable ſupply to be timely brought unto them.

XIII. The preſent condition of this Company is a great diſcouragement to any Merchant to joyn with them, being indebted for a very great ſumme of monies, Which they have at Intereſt.

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The payment of the very Intereſt, and other daily charges for the ſupport of the government, do's put a great charge upon the Manufactures; how much more muſt it be for the raiſing monies to pay the capital ſumme owing; old men that made the debts, and got eſtates by it; have moſt left off trading, and pay nothing to diſchage this debt; and thoſe they now invite in upon paying down one hundred pounds, may no ſooner be made a brother, but may be arreſted for the paying of their Company debts, and be left by them to the mercy of the Creditors as a kind of revenge upon them.

XIV. The ſmall number of the trading-members of the ſaid Company, is humbly offered as a ſtrong Argument againſt confining ſo general and great a Trade into ſo few hands, who may well be ſuppoſed not to have ſtocks enough to manage the whole Manufactures of this Kingdom; for when they traded with more Members who had great ſums at Intereſt, and ſtretched their credit by Exchange and otherwiſe to the uttermoſt, (though to the ruine of many, yet then the free-traders ſhipped from this Port of *London* as much as the ſaid Merchant-adventurers reckoning all ſorts of goods; beſides what was ſhipped by free-traders at *Exon. Colcheſter* and other Ports: where the Company exported little or nothing; ——— We could enumerate many exorbitant practiſes of theſe Monopolizers towards his Majeſties Subjects by ſeizing on their goods, by taking their goods out of Ships, and detaining them at pleaſure; yea, have refuſed ſuch as deſired to come in to them, with many other tyrannical courſes, both here and abroad; to their fellow-ſubjects and to ſtrangers alſo, upon whom they Impoſe their termes, and make their wills binding, as though it were the duty of Chapmen to pay and pray too; which cauſeth that the generality of the Dutch ſhop-keepers do hate them; and chuſe rather to take pains to make Cloth, than to be ſo proudly impoſed on; But we are not willing to ravel into the manifold oppreſſions of this Company, they being ſo notoriouſly known, that men do not wonder they have no better ſucceſſe; it falling out, at leaſt to many, according to the Proverb, *All covet, all loſe.*